



## Press Clipping Article

**Title:** Bill would provide more for prevention

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**Lead:**

Kentucky is turning over a new leaf when it comes to tobacco and health. It's about time. Proof positive that health concerns are making headway was last year's increase in the state's cigarette tax from three to 30 cents per pack.

### Article:

Kentucky is turning over a new leaf when it comes to tobacco and health. It's about time. Proof positive that health concerns are making headway was last year's increase in the state's cigarette tax from three to 30 cents per pack.

Further progress could be made this year if the General Assembly passes House Bill 566, which would double the current state spending on preventing and reducing tobacco use. The money would come from an escrow account established by cigarette companies that do not participate in the 1998 Master Settlement Agreement.

These so-called "non participating manufacturers" - or NPMs - have already put millions in this escrow account that the state cannot access. The bill would allow the NPMs the option to release that money to the state.

The first \$2.2 million the state collects each year will be used to expand the state's woefully under-funded tobacco prevention and cessation program. We currently rank 37th in the nation in spending on tobacco prevention, so it's no surprise that our smoking rates are consistently the highest in the nation.

We still need to do more but this new support for the state's efforts to prevent and reduce smoking is an important first step in the right direction.

It's just common sense that tobacco settlement funds be used to reduce the harm caused by smoking.

There's been a lot of talk about a proposed replacement of tobacco settlement payments with a so-called "flat tax" on cigarette manufacturers. But the "flat tax" offers no public health benefits and could result in lawsuits that put current funding at risk.

In the past, Kentucky has failed to take the simple steps necessary to reduce the harms and costs related to smoking. That tragic tradition is finally changing.

Jennifer Friedman, Campaign For Tobacco-Free Kids, Washington, D.C

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